



Cutworms

Black cutworm, *Agrotis ipsilon*

Bronzed cutworm, *Nephelodes minians*

Variiegated cutworm, *Peridroma saucia*

Order Lepidoptera, Family Noctuidae; Noctuid moths

Native pest

Pest information: Turfgrasses, blade feeding larvae; adults do not feed.

Description: Full-grown cutworm larvae are about 40 mm long. The variegated cutworm's color ranges from brown to gray. The black cutworm larvae are dark gray above and light gray below with black dots along the side of the body. The bronzed cutworm's color is a mottled burgundy brown. When disturbed cutworms roll into a ball.

Life history: Black cutworm adults arrive in summer on southerly winds and larvae cannot overwinter. In golf courses, they are often found on greens surrounded by dense rough. The larvae feed on the grass blades or cut the grass off at the soil surface at night. During the day they hide in the soil or under debris. Aeration holes in greens are often utilized by cutworms as burrows. However, the presence of these aeration holes does not increase the number of cutworms. It is possible to have 1–3 generations per year.

Overwintering: Pupae in soil.

Damage symptoms: Blades are removed and hiding holes are made in the sod; birds and skunks dig up the sod searching for larvae.

Monitoring: Look for larvae during the day in the soil or under debris.

Cultural control: Maintain healthy grass by fertilizing in the spring and fall and watering during periods of drought.

Chemical control: Black and variegated cutworms are the most common pests on home lawns. Black cutworms are common on golf courses. Treat when larvae are noticed. Light traps and pheromone traps can be used to monitor adult activity. Bronzed cutworms are spring and early summer pests. Best efficacy is achieved by spraying late in the day and not irrigating, but follow label directions for irrigation. Treat at first signs of damage. Use a soap flush to detect the larvae. Do not use broad spectrum insecticides routinely, as they will do more harm than good and will kill the beneficial insects that live in the turf, which can cause pest outbreaks.

Biological control: Carabid ground beetles, staphylinid rove beetles, ants, spiders.

Plant mortality risk: Medium

Biorational pesticides: azadirachtin, halofenozide, nematodes (*Heterorhabditis bacteriophora*, *Steinernema carpocapsae*), spinosad



Bronzed cutworm larva. (W111)

Photo: Whitney Cranshaw



Cutworm larva in ball. (277)

Photo: John Davidson



Black cutworm larva. (276)

Photo: University of Minnesota Entomology

Conventional pesticides: acephate, beta-cyfluthrin, bifenthrin, carbaryl, chlorpyrifos, cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, imidacloprid, (suppression only), lambda-cyhalothrin, trichlorfon